

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Original): A peptide that is a maturation product of the Basic Prolin-rich Lacrimal Protein (BPLP) or a peptide derivative of said maturation product, wherein the peptide or peptide derivative exhibits a modulatory property against a metallo-ectopeptidase.

Claim 2 (Original): The peptide or peptide derivative according to claim 1, wherein the peptide or peptide derivative has an inhibitory property against a metallo-ectopeptidase.

Claim 3 (Original): The peptide of claim 1, wherein said metallo-ectopeptidase is NEP or APN.

Claim 4 (Original): The peptide or peptide derivative of claim 1, wherein said peptide or peptide derivative comprises the sequence X1-X2-Arg-Phe-Ser-Arg (SEQ ID No:6), wherein :

- X1 represents H atom or a Tyr amino acid or a Cys amino acid,
- X2 represents Gln or Glp when X1 is H, or X2 represents Gln when X1 is Tyr,

wherein said sequence X1-X2-Arg-Phe-Ser-Arg (SEQ ID No:6) is the C-terminal part of said peptide.

Claim 5 (Original): The peptide of claim 1, that consists of sequence X1-X2-Arg-Phe-Ser-Arg (SEQ ID No:6).

Claim 6 (Original): The peptide of claim 4, wherein the said peptide comprises the sequence QRFSR (SEQ ID No:3), YQRFSR (SEQ ID No:4), or CQRFSR (SEQ ID No:5).

Claim 7 (Original): The peptide of claim 6, which consists of sequence QRFSR (SEQ ID No:3).

Claim 8 (Original): The peptide of claim 6, which consists of sequence YQRFSR (SEQ ID No:4) .

Claim 9 (Original): The peptide of claim 6, which consists of sequence CQRFSR (SEQ ID No:5).

Claim 10 (Currently Amended): A nucleic acid that encodes a peptide of ~~any of claims 1 to 9~~ claim 1.

Claim 11 (Original): A vector for cloning and/or expression, which vector comprises a nucleic acid of claim 10.

Claim 12 (Currently Amended): A host cell comprising the nucleic acid of claim 10 ~~or the vector of claim 11~~.

Claim 13 (Currently Amended): An antibody that specifically recognizes a peptide of ~~any of claims 1 to 9~~ claim 1.

Claim 14 (Original): An antibody that specifically recognizes the BPLP protein.

Claim 15 (Currently Amended): A pharmaceutical composition comprising a peptide according to ~~any of claims 1 to 9~~ claim 1 or a derivative or a mimetic thereof, in association with a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

Claim 16 (Currently Amended): A pharmaceutical composition, comprising a polymer of a peptide according to ~~claims 1 to 9~~ claim 1, or a derivative or mimetic thereof, in association with a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

Claim 17 (Currently Amended): A pharmaceutical composition comprising a nucleic acid of claim 10 ~~or a vector according to claim 11 expressing said nucleic acid~~.

Claim 18 (Original): A pharmaceutical composition comprising a nucleic acid coding for the BPLP protein or a vector expressing said nucleic acid.

Claim 19 (Currently Amended): A pharmaceutical composition comprising an antibody of claim 13 [[or 14]].

Claim 20 (Original): A pharmaceutical composition comprising a BPLP protein in association with a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

Claim 21 (Currently Amended): A pharmaceutical composition according to ~~claims 15 to 18 and 20~~ claim 15, comprising a second pharmaceutical agent that acts synergistically with BPLP-peptide.

Claim 22 (Currently Amended): A method of preventing or treating a disease wherein a modulation of the activity of a membrane metallopeptidase is sought which comprises administering a patient in need thereof with a peptide according to ~~any of claims 1 to 9~~ claim 1 or a derivative or a mimetic thereof.

Claim 23 (Original): The use of claim 22, wherein the metallopeptidase is a membrane-zinc metallopeptidase.

Claim 24 (Original): The use of claim 23, wherein the metallopeptidase is NEP or APN.

Claim 25 (Currently Amended): A method of preventing or treating pain which comprises administering a patient in need thereof with a peptide according to ~~any of claims 1 to 9~~ claim 1, or a derivative or a mimetic thereof.

Claim 26 (Original): The use of claim 25, wherein the pain is chronic, acute, visceral inflammatory or neuropathic pain.

Claim 27 (Currently Amended): A method of preventing or treating hydro-mineral imbalance which comprises administering a patient in need thereof with a peptide according to ~~any of claims 1 to 9~~ claim 1, or a derivative or a mimetic thereof.

Claim 28 (Original): The method of claim 27, for the prevention or treatment of bone, teeth, kidney, parathyroid, pancreas, intestine, stomach mucosa, prostate, and salivary gland disorders that are caused by hydro-mineral imbalance.

Claim 29 (Original): The method of claim 28, wherein the disorder is selected from the group consisting of hyper or hypo-parathyroidism, osteoporosis, pancreatitis, submandibular gland lithiasis, nephrolithiasis and osteodystrophy.

Claim 30 (Currently Amended): A method of preventing or treating impaired interpersonal and behavioural disorder which comprises administering a patient in need thereof with a peptide according to ~~any of claims 1 to 9~~ claim 1 or a derivative or a mimetic thereof.

Claim 31 (Original): The method of claim 30, wherein the disorder is selected from the group consisting of avoidance disorder, decreased awareness disorder, autistic disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, hospitalism, impaired interpersonal functioning and relationship to the external world, schizoid personality disorder, schizophrenia, decreased interest in environment, impaired social activity linked to sexuality, and impaired sexual behaviour.

Claim 32 (Original): The method of claim 30, wherein the disorder is depressive disorder.

Claim 33 (Original): The method according to claim 22, for the prevention or treatment of inflammatory arthritis.

Claim 34 (Original): The method according to claim 22, wherein the peptide or derivative or mimetic thereof acts as a natriuretic agent.

Claim 35 (Original): The method according to claim 22, wherein the peptide or derivative or mimetic thereof acts as a diuretic agent.

Claim 36 (Original): The method according to claim 22, for the prevention or treatment of atherosclerosis.

Claim 37 (Original): The method according to claim 22, for the prevention or treatment of a tumor.

Claim 38 (Original): The method according to claim 22, for the prevention or treatment of inflammatory bowel disease.

Claim 39 (Original): The method according to claim 22, for the treatment of infections.

Claim 40 (Original): The method according to claim 22, for controlling immuno-inflammatory responses.

Claim 41 (Original): The method according to claim 22, for the treatment of a neurodegenerative disease.

Claim 42 (Original): The method according to claim 41, for the treatment of a neurodegenerative disease associated with amyloidosis.

Claim 43 (Currently Amended): A method of preventing or treating of a disease as ~~defined in any of claims 22 to 42~~ which comprises administering a patient in need thereof with a nucleic acid according to claim 10.

Claim 44 (Original): The method according to claim 43, wherein said nucleic acid from part of a vector.

Claim 45 (Currently Amended): A method of preventing or treating of a disease as ~~defined in any of claims 22 to 42~~ which comprises administering a patient in need thereof with an antibody according to claim 13.

Claim 46 (Currently Amended): A method of preventing or treating of a disease as defined in ~~any of claims 22 to 42~~ claim 22 which comprises administering a patient in need thereof with a BPLP protein.

Claim 47 (Currently Amended): A method of preventing or treating of a disease as defined in ~~any of claims 22 to 42~~ claim 22 which comprises administering a patient in need thereof with a nucleic acid that encodes a BPLP protein.

Claim 48 (Original): The method according to claim 47, wherein said nucleic acid form part of a vector.

Claim 49 (Currently Amended): A method of preventing or treating of a disease as ~~defined in any of claims 22 to 42~~ which comprises administering a patient in need thereof with an antibody directed against BPLP protein according to claim 14.

Claim 50 (Original): An *in vitro* method for prognosis, diagnosis or determination of the evolution of a condition involving an altered production of BPLP or of any of its maturation products, which method comprises detecting, or quantifying in a biological sample of a test subject, a BPLP protein or a maturation products thereof, and comparing the production of BPLP protein or maturation products with the production of the same in a biological sample of a control subject.

Claim 51 (Currently Amended): ~~[[The]]~~ A ~~method of claim 50, wherein~~ for a detection of the production of BPLP or of any of its maturation products is performed by contacting a biological sample with an antibody as defined in claim 13 ~~[[or 14]]~~.

Claim 52 (Original): An *in vitro* method for prognosis or diagnosis of a condition involving an altered production of BPLP or of any of its maturation products, which method comprises detecting in a biological sample of a test subject, a quantitative and/or qualitative abnormality in the BPLP gene or in its transcript.

Claim 53 (Original): An *in vitro* method for screening compounds for their ability to bind to the NEP binding site for the BPLP protein or a maturation product thereof, comprising the steps of:

a) incubating a candidate compound with a NEP expressing cell, in the presence of the BPLP protein or a maturation product thereof, or in the presence of any peptide retaining the binding specificity or the physiological activity of BPLP protein or of its maturation products;

b) determining the ability of the candidate compound to compete with the BPLP protein or a maturation product thereof, or with the peptide retaining the binding specificity or the physiological activity of BPLP protein or of its maturation products, for binding to NEP.

Claim 54 (Original): The method of claim 53, comprising the steps of :

- a) preparing a cell culture or preparing an organ specimen or a tissue sample containing NEP binding sites for the BPLP protein or maturation products thereof ;
- b) adding the candidate compound to be tested in competition with half-saturation concentration of labeled BPLP protein or maturation product thereof, or any peptide that retains the binding specificity or the physiological activity of the BPLP protein or of its matured products ;
- c) incubating the cell culture, organ specimen or tissue sample of step a) in the presence of the candidate compound during a time sufficient and under conditions for the specific binding to take place ;
- d) quantifying the label specifically bound to the cell culture, organ specimen or tissue sample in the presence of various concentrations of candidate compound.

Claim 55 (Original): A method for determining the affinity of a compound that specifically binds to the NEP binding site for the BPLP protein or maturation products thereof, comprising the steps of :

- a) preparing a cell culture or preparing an organ specimen or a tissue sample containing NEP binding sites for the BPLP protein or maturation products thereof ;
- b) adding the candidate compound which has previously been labeled with a radioactive or a nonradioactive label ;

c) incubating the cell culture, organ specimen or tissue sample of step a) in the presence of the labeled candidate compound during a time sufficient and under conditions for the specific binding to take place ; and

d) quantifying the label specifically bound to the cell culture, organ specimen or tissue sample in the presence of various concentrations of the labeled candidate compound.

Claim 56 (Original): An *in vitro* method for screening compounds for their ability to act as agonists or antagonists of the BPLP protein or maturation products thereof on NEP activity, which method comprises the steps of :

a) incubating a candidate compound with a NEP expressing cell, in the presence of (i) the BPLP protein or a maturation product thereof, or any peptide retaining the binding specificity or the physiological activity of the BPLP protein or of its matured products, and (ii) a NEP substrate ;

b) determining the endoproteolysis of the NEP substrate by the NEP, wherein an increased endoproteolysis in the presence of the candidate compound, in comparison with the endoproteolysis in the absence of the candidate compound, is indicative of an antagonist activity; while a decreased endoproteolysis in the presence of the candidate compound, in comparison with the endoproteolysis in the absence of the candidate compound, is indicative of an agonist activity.

Claim 57 (Original): The method of claim 56, for screening a compound that is an agonist of the BPLP protein or a maturation product thereof, comprising the steps of :

a) preparing a cell culture or preparing an organ specimen or a tissue sample containing NEP binding sites for the BPLP protein or a maturation product thereof;

b) incubating the cell culture, organ specimen or tissue sample of step a) at concentrations allowing measurement of NEP enzymatic activity in the presence of (i) the candidate compound, (ii) a half-saturating concentration of the BPLP protein or a maturation product thereof or any peptide retaining the binding specificity or the physiological activity of the BPLP protein or of its matured products and (iii) a NEP substrate, during a time sufficient for the endoproteolysis of the NEP substrate to take place under initial velocity conditions ;

c) quantifying the activity of the NEP present in the biological material of step a) by measuring the levels of NEP substrate endoproteolysis, respectively in the presence or in the absence of the candidate compound and in the presence or in the absence of the BPLP protein or a maturation product thereof, or of the peptide retaining the binding specificity or the physiological activity of the BPLP protein or of its matured products.

Claim 58 (Original): The method of claim 56 for screening a compound that is an antagonist of the BPLP protein or a maturation product thereof, comprising the steps of :

a) preparing a cell culture or preparing an organ specimen or a tissue sample containing NEP binding sites for the BPLP protein or a maturation product thereof;

b) incubating the cell culture, organ specimen or tissue sample of step a) at concentrations allowing measurement of NEP enzymatic activity under initial velocity conditions in the presence of a submaximal concentration of the BPLP protein or a maturation product thereof or any peptide retaining the binding specificity or the physiological activity of the BPLP protein or of its matured products, and a NEP substrate, in the presence of the candidate compound, during a time sufficient for the endoproteolysis of the NEP substrate to take place under initial velocity conditions ;

c) quantifying the activity of the NEP present in the biological material of step a) by measuring the levels of NEP substrate endoproteolysis, respectively in the presence or in the absence of the candidate compound and in the presence or in the absence of the BPLP protein or a maturation product thereof or of the peptide retaining the binding specificity or the physiological activity of the BPLP protein or of its matured products.

Claim 59 (Original): A molecular complex comprising :

- a metallo-ectopeptidase receptor, especially a NEP receptor or an APN receptor, binding site of the BPLP-protein or maturation products thereof ;
- the BPLP-protein or maturation products thereof.

Claim 60 (Original): A method of preventing or treating diseases wherein a modulation of the activity of said membrane metallopeptidase is sought which comprises administering a patient in need thereof with an agent that modulates the interaction between endogenous BPLP protein or maturation product and a membrane metallopeptidase.

Claim 61 (New): A host cell comprising the vector of claim 11.

Claim 62 (New): A pharmaceutical composition comprising the vector of claim 11.

Claim 63 (New): A pharmaceutical composition comprising an antibody of claim 14.

Claim 64 (New): A pharmaceutical composition of claim 18 comprising a second pharmaceutical agent that acts synergistically with BPLP-peptide.

Claim 65 (New): A pharmaceutical composition of claim 20 comprising a second pharmaceutical agent that acts synergistically with BPLP-peptide.

Claim 66 (New): A method for a detection of the production of BPLP or of any of its maturation products is performed by contacting a biological sample with an antibody as defined in claim 14.